

Frequently Asked Questions

WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide

(March 19, 2012)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **What is a “food category”?**

The term “food category” refers to the larger general grouping of foods, such as cheese, milk, eggs, peanut butter, canned fish, whole grains, etc. In the WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide they are written in purple and all capital letters. The food category names will be printed on the checks (food instruments) in the *What to buy section* after the quantity and size; for example, 16 oz CHEESE. To find out what specific foods a WIC participant can or cannot buy with this check, locate the food category CHEESE in the WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide and look in the “can buy” and “cannot buy” sections.

2. **What is the meaning of “Authorized food items are specific to each individual food category”?**

This statement means that only the foods listed in the WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide for the specific food category that matches the food category on the check may be purchased. For example, when a check is for food category DRY BEANS, PEAS OR LENTILS the WIC participant may only purchase what is allowed for the DRY BEANS, PEAS OR LENTILS food category under the “can buy” section of the WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide. They cannot buy canned or frozen beans with this check.

3. **Do participants have to get everything that is printed on the check?**

Not unless the food instrument specifically says “Must Buy Full Quantity”. This only occurs with one item – infant formula.

MILK

1. **Are participants required to buy store brand milk?**

No, participants may buy any brand of milk.

2. **What is ultra-pasteurized milk?**

Ultra-pasteurized milk is refrigerated fluid milk that has been heat-treated so that it lasts longer on the store shelf without spoiling. Once the container is opened, the milk will spoil at the same rate as regular milk.

3. **Why can’t all participants buy whole milk?**

USDA rules only allow whole milk for children 1-2 years old. All other participants will get lower fat milk choices because these are healthier choices for older children and women. The checks will be specific to the type of milk allowed.

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4. Can participants buy powdered dry milk and fluid milk on one check?

No, a participant must choose one or the other. They cannot combine forms with the same check.

5. When can a participant buy evaporated milk instead of fluid milk?

A participant can substitute evaporated milk for fluid milk only if they receive a food instrument that has 1 gallon or 1gallon and ½ gallon of milk on it. The food instrument lists whether this must be purchased in whole or lower fat levels. Please see the Shopping Guide for exact number of cans that can be purchased. It does not matter whether this is a check with multipack foods or a single milk check.

6. Can I get evaporated milk with my check that has 1 gallon and 1 quart or my check that has 2 gallons?

No, evaporated milk can only be substituted with the 1 gallon check or the 1 gallon and 1 half gallon check in order to get the maximum amount of milk for participants.

CHEESE

1. What does “blended” cheese mean?

When two or more types of cheeses are mixed together into a block it is called blended or marbled. Colby-Jack cheese and Cheddarella are examples of blended cheese.

EGGS

1. Why can't participants buy brown eggs?

Brown eggs are more expensive than white eggs. The color of the egg does not affect the nutrition.

2. Why are you offering only large eggs?

Large eggs are the most commonly available size.

SOY

1. Why can't participants buy any brand of soy-based beverage?

Soy-based beverage must meet specific nutrient requirements. Currently only Pacific Ultra Soy Plain and 8th Continent Soymilk Original meet these requirements.

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2. What are the fat levels in the two allowed brands of soy-based beverage in comparison to cow's milk?

Fat levels for 8 fluid ounces are:

- Pacific Ultra Soy Plain = 4 g (close to 2% cow's milk)
- 8th Continent Soymilk Original = 2.5 g (close to 1% cow's milk)
- Whole cow's milk = 8 g
- 2% Reduced fat cow's milk = 5 g
- 1% Low fat cow's milk = 2 g
- Nonfat or skim cow's milk = 1 g

3. Is Pacific Ultra Soy Plain organic?

It does not meet USDA's definition of organic. However, it is made with 92-93% organic soybeans.

4. Is 8th Continent Soymilk Original organic?

No.

5. Will 8th Continent Light Soymilk or 8th Continent Nonfat Soymilk be allowed?

No, these do not meet the federal nutrient requirements.

6. What is the difference between refrigerated and shelf-stable soy-based beverage?

Shelf-stable soy-based beverage does not require refrigeration before it is opened.

TOFU

1. Why are some textures of certain brands of tofu not allowed?

They are not calcium-set or they are not 14 -16 oz in size.

2. Why can't participants buy bulk (not pre-packaged) tofu?

There is a risk of poor sanitation with bulk tofu.

WHOLE GRAINS

1. Why is it hard to find 16 oz 100% whole wheat bread at the store?

Stores are not required to carry the 16 oz 100% whole wheat bread as long as there is another allowed whole grain in the required quantity of 16 ounces. It is important for participants to tell their stores that they would purchase the 16 oz 100% whole wheat bread if the stores stock it.

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2. Can participants buy 100% Honey Whole Wheat Bread?

Yes, as long as it is in a 16 oz package and 100% Whole Wheat is printed on the front label.

3. Can participants buy hot dog buns or hamburger buns?

Yes, as long as they are in a 16 oz package and 100% Whole Wheat is printed on the front label.

4. What is the difference between the oatmeal on the cereal check and the oatmeal they can buy with the whole grain check?

The oatmeal allowed on the BREAKFAST CEREAL check is instant oatmeal in individual serving packets. It contains the required amount of iron. The oatmeal allowed on the WHOLE GRAINS check can be purchased in a 16 oz package or in bulk. There is no requirement for iron fortification for whole grains.

5. If a participant buys any whole grains in bulk and goes over 16 oz due to scale differences, what are the options for the participant? Can she pay the difference?

The vendor can adjust the quantity to 16 ounces because the WIC Program will not pay for a quantity exceeding the specified quantity on the check (food instrument). Participants are not allowed to pay the difference on any check except for the Fruit and Vegetable check.

BREAKFAST CEREAL

1. Can participants buy authorized cereal if the package size does not add up to 36 oz.?

Yes, participants can buy less than the 36 oz.

PEANUT BUTTER

1. Why can't participants buy reduced fat or lowfat peanut butter?

Most reduced or lowfat peanut butters do not meet the federal requirement of containing 90% peanuts.

CANNED MATURE BEANS

1. What are mature beans?

When the seeds in the bean pod grow to their full size and maturity, the term "mature beans" is used. Examples of mature beans are pinto beans, black beans, garbanzo beans and navy beans. Beans such as green beans, string beans and wax beans are not mature beans.

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2. What is in the CANNED MATURE BEANS food category?

This food category contains plain, cooked mature beans such as black beans, kidney beans, and pinto beans in 15 – 16 oz cans. See the WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide for more information. Canned mature beans do not include canned green beans, string beans, or wax beans.

3. Which check can be used to buy canned mature beans?

Participants may only buy canned mature beans when “CANNED MATURE BEANS” is printed on the check.

CANNED FISH

1. Can participants buy more than one type of fish on a WIC check?

Yes, as long as it is an authorized fish type and does not go over the amount printed on the check.

INFANT FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AND INFANT MEATS

1. Why do the infant checks no longer specify 2-pack?

The 3.5 oz containers of infant fruits and vegetables are packaged individually as well as in multi-packs. Removing the 2-pack wording will allow participants to purchase 3.5 oz containers in a variety of packaging.

2. Can participants still buy the 2-packs?

Yes, participants can buy any multi-pack as long as the numbers of containers add up to the amount on the check. For example, if the check states 18 (3.5 oz) containers, participants can buy 9, 2-packs.

3. Can participants buy any brand of infant fruits and vegetables with the same check?

Yes, as long as it is packaged in 3.5 oz or 4 oz containers.

4. Can participants buy both 3.5 oz and 4 oz containers with the same check?

No, participants must buy either the 3.5 oz or 4 oz containers. They cannot buy both with the same check.

5. Do participants have to buy all the infant fruits and vegetables or infant meats on the check?

No, participants can buy fewer containers, but they will not be able to buy the rest later.

6. Are infant fruits with added fruit juice allowed?

Yes.

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INFANT FORMULA

1. **Why is it that infant formula product information and images are no longer included in the WAFL Shopping Guide?**

Due to frequent changes to names and labels made by the infant formula manufacturer, it is difficult to keep the formula information in the WAFL current; therefore, the information has been removed the WAFL and is instead listed on our website in the form of a flyer, which can be found [here](#). This flyer can be used as a tool by both vendors and participants, and is to be printed out at the local agency, per participant request.

JUICE (CONCENTRATE AND BOTTLED)

1. **Why do the front labels of Ruby Red and Pink Grapefruit juice need to state 120% Vitamin C (or more) when the front label of White Grapefruit juice does not?**

Ruby Red and Pink Grapefruit are not pure grapefruit juice because they are blended with non-citrus juices. To meet the federal requirements, their front labels must state that they are at least 120% Vitamin C.

2. **The WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide shows that participants can purchase juice blends. Can a participant buy orange-tangerine juice?**

No, participants can only buy juice blends, which are named as one or more of the authorized flavors on the front label. For example, apple-grape blend is allowed because apple and grape are both authorized flavors. Tangerine is not an authorized flavor.

3. **What is in CONCENTRATE JUICE food category compared to BOTTLED JUICE food category?**

CONCENTRATE JUICE food category includes both frozen and non-frozen concentrate juice. The BOTTLED JUICE food category only includes the single strength ready-to-drink, shelf-stable juice.

4. **How do participants buy the maximum amount of juice?**

Children can get the full amount of juice if they buy two 64 oz bottles or 16 oz containers of frozen concentrate juice.

Women, who are pregnant or are breastfeeding mostly or fully, can get the full amount of juice with three 11.5 or 12 oz containers of frozen or non-frozen concentrate juice.

Women, who are breastfeeding a little or who are not breastfeeding, can get the maximum amount of juice with two 11.5 or 12 oz containers of frozen or non-frozen concentrate juice.

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FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (CANNED FRUITS)

1. **Can participants buy small fruit cup type containers?**
Yes, they may buy any size and type of container, as long as the contents do not have added sugars or artificial sweeteners.
2. **Can participants buy applesauce in glass or plastic jars?**
Yes, applesauce is allowed in any container type.
3. **Can participants buy blends of applesauce with other fruits such as berries?**
Yes, they are allowed only if they do not have added sugars or artificial sweeteners.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (CANNED VEGETABLES)

1. **Can participants buy canned hominy?**
Yes, canned hominy is a type of corn.
2. **Can participants buy canned mixed vegetables containing mature beans with the Fruit and Vegetable check?**
No.
3. **Why can't participants buy stewed tomatoes, tomato sauce, pizza sauce, spaghetti sauce, ketchup, salsa, and soup?**
USDA does not allow tomato products with added sugar, fat, or oils. All of the listed items typically contain at least one of these ingredients.

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FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (FROZEN VEGETABLES)

1. **Can participants buy mixtures of frozen vegetables that contain frozen beans such as soy beans or lima beans?**
Yes, frozen beans or frozen bean and vegetable mixtures may be purchased with the Fruit and Vegetable check.
2. **Can participants buy frozen vegetables that can be cooked in the bag?**
Yes, any container type is allowed as long as it contains vegetables only. It may not contain other ingredients such as seasonings, sauces, or grains.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (FRESH)

1. **Why are white potatoes not allowed?**
The federal rule does not allow white potatoes because the diets of most Americans already include a lot of potatoes.
2. **Can participants buy white and red yams?**
Yes, any color of yam or sweet potato is allowed.
3. **Can participants buy berries packaged in containers?**
Yes, as long as there is no added sugar, oil, or fat.
4. **Can participants buy onions, garlic, chilies and jalapenos?**
Yes, as long as they are not decorative, on a string, dried, or have oils or seasonings added to them.
5. **Can participants buy green onions?**
Yes.
6. **Can participants buy fruit roll-ups?**
No, fruit roll-ups often have added sugar, oil, or fat.

FRUITS (DRIED)

1. **Can participants buy dried fruit with the fruit and vegetable check?**
Women can purchase dried fruits with their fruit and vegetable check. Children cannot.
2. **Is any dried fruit allowed?**
No, only dried fruits without added fats, oils, or sugars.
3. **Are dried vegetables allowed?**
No.

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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CHECK (FOOD INSTRUMENT)

1. **Can participants mix fruits and vegetables with their Fruit and Vegetable check?**
Yes.
2. **Will California WIC specify the allowed package sizes?**
No, any sizes may be purchased. The Fruit and Vegetable check is issued in a maximum dollar amount, not in package size.
3. **What happens if the participant's purchase price goes over the limit on the Fruit and Vegetable check?**
The participant can pay the difference with food stamps benefits, cash, or credit. If she does not want to pay the difference, she can return some of the food to lower the price.
4. **If the purchase price is lower than the limit on the Fruit and Vegetable check, will the participant receive cash back?**
No, the participant will not receive cash back.
5. **Is the fruit and vegetable check going to be broken down into smaller denominations like the Farmers' Markets books or is it all to be on one check?**
No, there will be one check for the dollar amount allowed for the participant. For example, the Fruit and Vegetable check for a child will be for \$6.
6. **Can participants combine Fruit and Vegetable checks of two family members and have a combined transaction so that they don't lose money?**
No, each Fruit and Vegetable check must be used separately.
7. **Can the Fruit and Vegetable check be used at the Farmers' Markets?**
On May 17, 2010 the fruit and vegetable checks will be accepted at authorized farmer's markets. Please check the website at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/Pages/Farmers%27Market-ProgramOverview.aspx> for authorized farmer's market locations.
8. **Is the Fruit and Vegetable check the only check where the participant can pay the money difference?**
Yes.

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9. Can a participant buy canned mature beans such as kidney, pinto beans, black eyed peas, etc. with the Fruit & Vegetable check?

No. Participants cannot buy canned mature beans such as kidney, black, garbanzo, pinto or black eyed peas, with the Fruit & Vegetable check. Canned mature beans may be purchased ONLY if "CANNED MATURE BEANS" is printed on the check.

10. Can a participant buy any kind of frozen beans with the Fruit & Vegetable check?

Yes. Participants can buy any kind of frozen beans, such as green beans, wax beans, black beans, pinto beans, and black eyed peas, with the Fruit & Vegetable check.